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INFO RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE
RUEHAH/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT 4400
RUEHTA/AMEMBASSY ASTANA 0616
RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK 5017
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 0875
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RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 2902
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RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC 0312

C O N F I D E N T I A L TASHKENT 001193

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR INL ANDREW BUHLER AND ELIZABETH CARROLL
BUDAPEST FOR ILEA RON ELKINS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/17/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [PINR](#) [EAID](#) [UZ](#)
SUBJECT: GOOD TIMES AND GOODWILL FOR UZBEK LAW ENFORCEMENT
OFFICERS AT TRAINING PROGRAM

Classified By: Political Officer Tim Buckley for reasons 1.4 (B,D)

¶1. (C) Summary: On October 7 poloff paid a visit to the International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA) in Budapest, Hungary, where eight mid-level Uzbek officers from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the National Security Service (NSS) were wrapping up an eight-week training program funded by the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL). The visit offered a rare opportunity for an embassy officer to interact with security personnel, who were in a relaxed mood on neutral turf. The National Security Service major who served as the team leader said he would submit a positive report about the training program to his superiors and noted it was a welcome sign of improving U.S. - Uzbek relations. Significantly, officers from the two ministries appeared to bond with each other and promised to maintain professional contacts upon their return to Uzbekistan. The Uzbek officers also appreciated the chance to meet peers from Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, with whom they also plan to stay in touch. This was the first time Uzbek officers participated in an ILEA course since 2005, which helped give us an important toehold for assistance projects and generated goodwill among officers who may rise quickly in the ranks. End summary.

Was the Class Half-Full or Half-Empty?

¶2. (C) Poloff paid a visit to the ILEA Academy in Budapest, Hungary on October 7, where four officers from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and four National Security Service officers were in the final days of an eight-week INL-funded program for mid-level officers from Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan. We originally invited 16 officers, including officers from the State Customs Committee, but after much behind-the-scenes diplomatic wrangling and deadline extensions we were satisfied to secure approval from the Government of Uzbekistan to send eight participants. No explanation was ever provided by the Government of Uzbekistan for why it ultimately accepted only half of the slots, but it was clear that Customs -- which readily maintained contacts

with the Embassy about the program -- ran afoul of more powerful forces and was cut as a punishment. It is also possible that President Karimov wanted to stick to the oft-stated "step by step" approach and not be seen as rushing to fully reengage with the U.S. (Comment: According to an MFA contact, even the decision about which officers would participate was made by President Karimov himself, which demonstrates the minutiae of top-down control in Uzbekistan and explains why some things happen so slowly. End comment.)

Praise from the Participants

13. (C) The training staff at ILEA offered poloff a chance to speak to the assembled Uzbek contingent in one of the lecture halls, and the officers were uniformly enthusiastic about their training experience. They were well aware it was a U.S.-funded program and expressed gratitude to the U.S. Government for the opportunity. They took professional pride that the curriculum they completed closely mirrored that of the FBI Academy in the United States. Poloff ran into an FBI SWAT training team which had just completed a session, and the members affirmed that they enjoyed working with the Uzbek officers.

Happy Hour

14. (C) Following a good-natured discussion, the officers invited poloff to join them for a happy hour celebrating the successful completion of the physical training portion of the

course. The Kazakh and Kyrgyz officers joined this event, and amicable toasts with Hungarian wine abounded. Unsurprisingly, the Ministry of Internal Affairs officers were the most jovial and friendly with the unexpected visitor from the Embassy while the National Security Service officers were polite but reserved. However, Gulistan-based National Security Service Major Jaloliddin Tashtemirov, who served as the group leader, seemed at ease sitting next to poloff and spoke of how the course was an example of improving U.S. - Uzbek relations. He also noted that we have many common challenges in the law enforcement sector.

It Was Great Meeting Each Other

15. (C) One Ministry of Internal Affairs officer told poloff that officers from his agency rarely interact with NSS officers in Uzbekistan, even if they are working on similar casework. The ILEA course gave him and his colleagues a chance to bond with and earn the respect of these National Security Service counterparts in the exercises. Officers from both agencies mentioned that they plan to stay in touch with each other and collaborate on investigations, which is an important institutional link in a culture which highly values personal connections.

It Was Great Meeting the Neighbors, Too

16. (C) In addition to the networking between Uzbek officers, the participants also appreciated the chance to interact with Central Asian colleagues from two adjacent countries. They noted that, as the course highlighted, there is an increasing amount of trans-national crime, and it will be valuable to have law enforcement contacts across the border. They have already traded cell phone numbers with each other, and one Uzbek Ministry of Internal Affairs officer emphasized that it makes a big difference to call someone he knows to discuss a case rather than cold-calling, especially in a rigid bureaucratic setting. This feeling was mutual, and one Kyrgyz officer posted in Osh said he was pleased to have met an Uzbek officer from Andijon, which is just a stone's throw away in the same Ferghana Valley.

Let's Do This Again

17. (C) Poloff asked Tashtemirov why it was so difficult to obtain approval for Uzbek officers to participate in the ILEA program. He noted that, as the team leader, he would submit a positive report about the experience to his superiors in Tashkent. Tashtemirov suggested that this group was breaking the ice and that subsequent groups of Uzbek officers would be able to secure permission much more easily. (Note: This likely reflects initial caution on the Uzbek side about the content and atmospherics of the program, including fears that there would be political content or attempts to co-opt the officers. End note.) Tashtemirov added another caveat: "Do not invite Customs. Stick to National Security Service and Ministry of Internal Affairs officers on the invitations."

Law Enforcement is Apolitical

18. (C) This ILEA session began on August 18 in the height of the crisis in Georgia, and an Amcit trainer noted that some of the participants told him they were nervous that their participation would be cancelled if their countries took the wrong stance vis-a-vis the United States in the lead up to their travel. They were relieved to arrive in Hungary as planned, where trainers emphasized that law enforcement officers should be apolitical and that the United States was

committed to their professional development. Likewise, training staff said that at one point in the course they stopped students from quizzing a visiting AmCit presenter about his views on the U.S. Presidential race in order to reinforce the point that police officers must fulfill their duties regardless of who wins an election. The Uzbeks separately mentioned to poloff that this was a useful "take-away" lesson for them.

Comment:

19. (C) This was the first time law enforcement officers from Uzbekistan participated in an ILEA program since 2005, and even hard-fought partial participation represented a valuable foot in the door that may help rebuild the bilateral relationship. It is in the U.S. interest to expose up-and-coming mid-level officers to a curriculum that includes human rights awareness and effective law enforcement techniques. On September 5 poloff escorted an OSCE visitor to the Ministry of Internal Affairs Training Academy in Tashkent, where a high-ranking Colonel proudly pointed to his ILEA diploma on display in a police museum. This new generation of officers came away from ILEA with new skills and fond memories of the West, which is a good investment for us even if for now Karimov hand-picks the participants.

NORLAND